



BOROUGH OF OKEHAMPTON

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

FOR

Year ending 31st December, 1946

PUBLIC HEALTH STAFF :

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH :

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D. (State Medicine), Ch.B., D.P.H.

SURVEYOR AND SANITARY INSPECTOR :

R. A. BRUNSKILL, D.P., R.S.I.

ASSISTANT TO SANITARY INSPECTOR :

E. FURSE.

HON. METEOROLOGIST :

ALDERMAN HARRY.

MR. MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND COUNCILLORS,

I beg to submit my annual report for the year ending 31st December, 1946.

The general health of the Borough remained good throughout the year, and apart from an outbreak of measles, the exanthemata were minimal.

As anticipated in my previous report, the birth rate showed a marked rise and is for the year considerably above that for the country as a whole.

The deaths showed a decline, and death from heart disease was considerably below the average of recent years.

This may be an indication of the lowering of tension in the older inhabitants who have had an unusually trying time from shell fire and general military manoeuvres during the war.

It may not be inappropriate to discuss briefly the general set up of the Public Health Administration in a small Rural Borough such as yours which, in the opinion of your Medical Officer, has little to commend it.

At the present time the Public Health is under dual control—what is known as the two tier system—the Borough Council being responsible for the environmental and some of the personal medical services, and the County Council for most of the personal services.

These two systems run parallel, hence there is no co-ordination. As a result of this, reduplication and inefficiency result.

For the great spending departments such as Education, Highways, etc., it is doubtless necessary on economic grounds to spread the burden over as wide an area as possible, but this argument does not hold with Public Health. Here, it is not vast sums of money which are needed, but an intimate and personal knowledge of the people and their surroundings.

The smaller the unit within reason, the better this requirement is fulfilled. The County is obviously too big to meet the need of intimacy, and the Borough falls to the other extreme as being quite incapable of providing, owing to its penny product, the necessary facilities.

It is, therefore, obvious that an intermediate authority is needed which would cover the whole ambit of Public Health administration. This would be best done by a union, preferably on a federal, but, compendious basis of several of the present county districts: due allowance being made for the retention of the individuality of ancient towns such as yours which have been, and, still are, centres of Rural Culture. By this means there would be complete co-ordination of all the factors making for health to the betterment of the inhabitants of all ages.

SECTION A

GENERAL STATISTICS

AREA (statute acres)	...	...	...	806
POPULATION—1931 Census	...	...	...	3307
ESTIMATED POPULATION—Mid 1946	...	...	...	3925
NUMBER OF INHABITED HOUSES	...	...	...	1050
RATEABLE VALUE	...	...	...	£23,891
PRODUCT OF PENNY RATE	...	...	...	£99 11.0d.

VITAL STATISTICS

			Male	Female	Total
Live Births	...	...	57	39	96
Legitimate	...	...	51	38	
Illegitimate	...	...	6	1	

				England and Wales
Birth rate per 1,000 population			24.5	19.1
Still Births	...	...	2	
Still Birth Rate	...	..	20.4	0.53

	Male	Female	Total	
Deaths	26	26	52	
Death rate per 1,000 population		...	13.2	11. 5
Deaths from puerperal causes	...	...	0.0	
Deaths of infants under 1 year	...	...	3	
Infantile mortality	...	...	31.2	43. 0

The 52 deaths of the townsfolk during the year were made up as follows :

INFECTIOUS CAUSES :

Pulmonary Tuberculosis	2
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GENERAL CAUSES :

Cancer	6
Cerebral Haemorrhage	8
Heart and Blood Vessels	13
Bronchitis	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Pneumonia	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Other Diseases of the Lungs	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Digestive Diseases	...	...	...	...	...	...	1
Nephritis	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Prematurity and Malformation	...	...	...	...	...	...	2
Road Accidents	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Other Violent Causes	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
All other Causes	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
							<hr/>
							52
							<hr/>

The majority of townsfolk lived to a ripe old age.

SECTION B.

GENERAL PROVISIONS OF THE HEALTH SERVICES.

The general provision of the health services remain as in previous years, and as regards the personal medical services, are almost entirely under the administrative control of the County Authority without any delegation or responsibility devolving on your Council.

It is the considered opinion of your Medical Officer that the public would be much more efficiently served if the day to day administration of these services, and maternity and child welfare is particularly stressed here, was delegated to your Council in order that requirements as regards housing, health visiting, infantile welfare, and nutrition could be locally co-ordinated, and all the factors needed for the adjustment of healthy living given proper weight. It is a physical impossibility for this to be done under the present two tier system ; particularly as one part of the administrative machinery is geographically so distant.

It would appear from recent legislation that unless some very strong representations are made, this anachronism is likely to be perpetuated.

Another facet of our social structure which has not received attention is the care of old people. Many cases are brought to my notice of old people, chiefly of the middle classes, having served their country well, who are now existing under conditions of great hardship through no fault of their own. The value of their securities has diminished, and, what is probably worse, they cannot obtain any assistance to minister to their needs. I would recommend to your Council the provision of a centre for these deserving citizens where they can enjoy the remainder of their days.

The Public Assistance Institution is used as a general infirmary, but no maternity accommodation is provided. The only maternity accommodation available is at the Okehampton War Memorial Hospital. Discussions are in progress with the Ministry of Health to increase this.

It is to be hoped that they are rewarded by success, as great hardship is being experienced by lack of this essential service.

SECTION C.

SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE AREA.

Mr. Brunskill has submitted the following report:

WATER SUPPLY.

Sources—

As in 1939, the sources of supply are two intakes, one at New Bridge on the Black-a-Ven Stream, and the older and smaller at Yes Tor, on Red-a-Ven Stream. Both are on Dartmoor, and are within the area of the proposed Dartmoor National Park, and are within the military training and artillery ranges.

Supplies at the intakes have been quite adequate throughout the year.

Rainfall—

Rainfall records are taken at two points on the watershed, and at the water filter station at Brackentor. During 1946 the rainfall was extraordinarily high, as will be seen from the following comparative figures for the past seven years.

Alderman Harry has taken the monthly readings at Cranmere and Newbridge. Records at the Filter Station are taken daily.

	1946	1945	1944	1943	1942	1941	1940
Cranmere	... 109. 4	76.70	86. 6	83.95	77. 8	65. 9	75. 6
New Bridge	... 86.15	61.60	63.45	65.60	64.15	56.15	63. 2
Filter Station	... 67.99	52.32	51.42	57.92	48.47	47.42	53.22
Dry Days							
(no rain)	... 105	180	178	142	174	177	

The driest months were July, March, and October, and the wettest November and September in that order. Falls of over 1in. in one day were recorded in January, May, August, September and November. On November 23rd there was a fall of 3.05in. in 24 hours, which is easily the highest since the records have been kept. These figures all refer to Filter Station Records.

Intake Mains—

Though lying in the artillery danger areas, the intake mains have escaped damage, and have functioned properly throughout the year, despite frequent artillery fire. Further work in clearing supply pipes and drains, and land draining, has been carried out on the abandoned works on the Okehampton Western Park Estate.

Filtration and Treatment—

The plant has been in continuous operation throughout the year with only minor intermittent faults remedied by the attendant in daily attendance. Filters are washed daily by high pressure air scour and kept up to a high operational standard which is essential owing to the intake of peaty solids. The treated water is clear and colourless and of excellent taste. Analyses indicate it to be of a satisfactory standard of purity, both bacteriologically and chemically.

Further improvement in the chemical treatment has been carried out by the installation of relay valves for chemical dosage, replacement of rubber tubing by transparent perspex plastic tubing and oil-bath immersed gearing on the Auto-minor equipment.

Distribution—

The zoned distribution system giving a standardised pressure in the central low-level area and maintaining pressure in the outer high-level zones continues to operate with the minimum of trouble. Extensions carried out include new mains on the first portion of the Lower Brayhams Temporary Housing Estate, for which asbestos cement pressure pipes have been used. Additional supplies in large quantities were supplied throughout the year again for the large service camp.

Mains were regularly flushed, and leak inspections continuously carried out. Leaks were found and repaired on 54 Corporation service pipes, 3 Corporation mains, and on 105 consumers' services. Considerable maintenance work in clearing service pipes, mainly by force pump, was carried out; no fewer than 105 services being treated in this way. An additional force pump for this work was purchased. The employment of a plumber as filter attendant for the past five years continues a most satisfactory arrangement for maintaining and servicing the undertaking.

Rivers and Streams—

The East and West Ockment Rivers have generally remained self-cleansing and very clean. Minor intermittent pollutions have been remedied.

Drainage and Sewerage—

Sewers and sewage disposal works have continued to operate satisfactorily with no serious defects. Trade effluent from the gas works has been dealt with. In Mill Road, defective joints were found in the main flushing sewers, and a portion of this has been relaid with new pipes.

At the sewage disposal works repairs and reconstruction of the screening and detritus tanks were carried out. In the course of these works the sludge beds were reconstructed to increase their capacity approximately sixfold, and also so as to greatly simplify disposal of the sludge on to the land.

Public Cleansing. Refuse Collection and Disposal—

These have been carried out directly by the Corporation. Labour and transport have again been in short supply for this work, but it has been regularly maintained.

In March, the Corporation at last received delivery of the 2-3 Ton Commer Tipping Motor Wagon. This is provided with a quick fitting dual-purpose body cover which I designed for sanitary refuse collection and general transport work. A crew of the driver and two men now collect the refuse satisfactorily on Thursdays and Fridays each week, with an additional trade collection on Tuesdays. At first a crew of four were tried experimentally, but, in practice, found to be unnecessary, and reduced to the present strength. Horses and carts previously in use, were disposed of. Street cleansing is also carried out over some areas at the time same as refuse collection. The collection and disposal of refuse in this manner is proving considerably more satisfactory than the former arrangements.

Disposal is by regulated tipping on the Council's refuse tip, where rodent control is carried out by the Council's own operator.

Salvage collection and disposal of salvage have also been continued regularly fortnightly. Waste paper, cardboard, and textiles are collected, baled, packed and sent away to the paper pulp mills, and textile factories.

Again the value of this work can be counted not only in the substantial financial returns accruing from it, but also in the reduction in the bulk of refuse in the bins, and the minimising of nuisance on the refuse tips. This also goes for kitchen waste, which is still generally disposed of in the street bins for its proper use for stock feed.

Sanitary Inspection : Visits as follows :

Houses	...	...	...	...	...	...	51
Houses <i>re</i> Housing		...	...	...	...	...	66
Drainage	...	...	...	...	...	...	28
Water Closets	...	...	...	...	...	...	10
Sewerage	...	...	...	...	...	...	21
Water Supply	...	...	...	...	...	...	97
Rivers	...	...	...	...	...	...	7
Refuse Removal		...	...	...	...	...	25
Salvage	...	...	...	...	...	...	47
Refuse Disposal Tip		...	...	...	...	...	27
Tents and Vans	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
Schools	...	...	...	...	...	...	19
Infectious Diseases		...	...	...	...	...	7
Infestation	...	...	...	...	...	...	9
Rodents	...	...	...	...	...	...	23
Animals	...	...	...	...	...	...	5
Miscellaneous	...	...	...	...	...	...	24
Informal Notices		...	...	...	...	...	35
Remedied	...	...	...	...	...	...	32

Infectious Diseases and Disinfection—

Premises have been disinfected and fumigated as follows, including the Primary School and Hospital.

Scarlet Fever	...	...	...	...	...	2
Tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	...	3
Other Cases	...	...	...	...	...	2

Disinfestation treatment has also been carried out at two houses.

Factories and Workshops—

These were generally kept in good condition, two informal notices being given for minor defects.

Smoke Abatement—

No formal action has been necessary.

Rodent Control—

During the year a rodent operator was appointed and trained in accordance with the Ministry of Food Scheme. Block control treatment was carried out in addition to treatment on the refuse disposal tip and sewage disposal works. The general incidence of infestation was in most cases quite small.

Offensive Trades—

Seven inspections of two establishments were made, but no action was necessary.

Fish Frying—

Two establishments, though small, have been well conducted, and both have been improved by the installation of new frying ranges.

Swimming Pools—

The swimming pool and childrens' paddling pool are both supplied by continuous running water, and both have remained and been conducted satisfactorily.

SECTION D.

HOUSING.

The present condition as regards housing, is too well known to your Council for me to reiterate the need.

During the year, further houses and properties were requisitioned, and the necessary adaptations and conversions necessary to provide separate units of accommodation were carried out. In all, fourteen flats and houses were provided in this way at small cost, giving valuable and useful accommodation.

Work on the erection of ten Uni-Seco houses on the Lower Brayhams Estate was carried out and completed, and these houses were let to suitable tenants.

A further application was made for the remaining fifteen temporary houses originally asked for, and on this being granted, site preparation works were put in hand for the rest of the Lower Brayhams site, and for the adjoining Brickfield site on which these additional houses are to be erected.

Site preparation works were put in hand on the Far View Estate for permanent houses, and were in progress at the end of the year. Tenders were also invited for traditional houses, but the prices were not approved, and therefore preparations were put in hand for the erection of non-traditional permanent houses.

SECTION E.

INSPECTION AND SUPERVISION OF FOOD.

Premises were visited, and advice given regularly to shopkeepers and tradesmen.

Milk—

A remarkable state of affairs exists with regard to the supervision of the milk supplies, which once again is directly due to the two tier system of Public Health administration. The County Council are the registration authority for T.T. and other designated milk production and their supervision. On the other hand, your Council are the authority for the registration and supervision of the ordinary supply.

The County have appointed a full time Sampling Officer to deal with their side of the business, which is the least needing supervision, and your Inspector is expected to deal with the remainder.

The ratio of sample failures indicates the relative importance of the two—ordinary samples—failed, 66 per cent. ; designated samples—failed, 22 per cent.

The logical solution would be for one officer stationed, and controlled locally to do the lot.

Another cause of worry is the fact that, as far as the writer is aware, there is nothing to prevent a Tuberculin reactor being removed from a T.T. herd and absorbed into an ordinary one and continued in milk until well advanced in the disease, to the grave danger of the community.

Meat—

The Tavistock Urban Council have authorised the inclusion of the subjoined table of meat inspection at their abattoir from whence you derive your meat.

Meat Inspection—

	Number of Animals Inspected.				
	Cattle	Cows	Pigs	Calves	Sheep
	1913	1368	304	1430	11,880
Percentage of whole carcasses affected with Tuberculosis	.47%	3.07%	.65%	.41%	—
Percentage of whole carcasses affected with disease other than Tuberculosis	.31%	1.83%	1.64%	2.65%	1.13%
Percentage of organs or parts affected with Tuberculosis	7.00%	16.95%	12.17%	—	—
Percentage of organs or parts affected with disease other than Tuberculosis	61.00%	63.01%	13.48%	.84%	20.78%
Total number of animals killed	...	...	...	...	16,895
Total number of carcasses condemned for Tuberculosis					59
Total number of carcasses condemned for disease other than Tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	208
Total number of animals affected with Tuberculosis in some part or organ	...	...	...	...	403
Total number affected in some part or organ with disease other than Tuberculosis	...	...	...	...	4551
					<u>5221</u>
					<u>==</u>
	or 30.9% of total carcasses				

In addition to the meat condemned at the Slaughterhouse, 2210 lbs. of corned beef was condemned at the Meat Market.

Other Foodstuffs—

Forty-five condemnation certificates have been issued, covering in nearly all cases, canned foods which had deteriorated owing to faulty containers.

SECTION F.

PREVALENCE AND CONTROL OVER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The prevalence of infectious disease was again below average for the town, and the only cases of disease notified by practitioners, were :

Scarlet Fever	2 cases
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Measles	53 cases
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Cases notified by the Schools, are as follows :

Measles	87 cases
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Mumps	3 „
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Scarlet Fever	3 „
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Chickenpox	8 „
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Impetigo	1 „
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Diphtheria—

No case of diphtheria was notified during the year.

The Immunisation Campaign proceeded normally, as it has done for the past eleven years.

It may be appropriate to remark here that since your Council approved the scheme in 1935, no case of diphtheria has occurred in an immunised individual.

During the year a register was made of the 993 children in the Borough on a card index system. This is kept up to date month by month from the birth register.

At the end of the year, 87% of the 993 children had been fully treated.

Tuberculosis—

Four new cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis were notified during the year, and two deaths were recorded.

Fourteen males and eleven females remain on the register.

In conclusion, I would thank the Mayor and Corporation for the ready hearing my proposals always receive.

I am, Mr. Mayor, Councillor Routh and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,

Medical Officer of Health.

ERATUM

Cases of infectious disease notified
by practitioners should read :-

Scarlet Fever	...	1	Case
Euerperal Fever	...	2	Cases
Pneumonia	...	1	Case
Whooping Cough	...	3	Cases
Measles	...	107	Cases

(Two cases were admitted to hospital)

